

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

June 18, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

We write in support of The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont's application for the Farmers' Market SNAP Support Grant for their Growing EBT Access and Capacity at Vermont Farmers Markets project. We are pleased to bring this proposal to your attention.

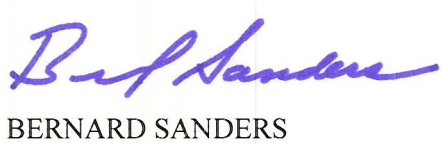

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) was founded in 1971 in Putney, Vermont, making it one of the oldest organic farming associations in the United States. Since the 1980s, NOFA-VT has worked with farmers markets and leads the Vermont Farmers Market Association. In 2007, NOFA-VT first deployed Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT), which increases access for limited-income Vermonters at farmers markets statewide.

In 2010, the Vermont Legislature commissioned the creation of a statewide agricultural strategic plan, The Vermont Farm to Plate Plan, with the ultimate goal of doubling consumption of local foods by Vermonters by 2020. A key goal in the Farm to Plate plan is to ensure a fresh, local market filled with healthy foods that all Vermonters can afford. Direct markets play a significant role in the Farm to Plate plan by increasing consumer access to, and consumption of, local foods.

The ability to use EBT at farmers markets is one of the only affordable ways to access local food which may not be available at more traditional food outlets. A Farmers' Market Support Grant will enable NOFA to increase low-income consumers' use of EBT at Farmers' markets, help to support growth in the capacity of existing farmers' market EBT programs, and increase the number of markets where EBT is accepted. Together, these accomplishments would bring us closer to providing all Vermonters with equal access to fresh, nutritious, and locally produced foods.

Thank you for giving this application the serious consideration it deserves. If we can provide further evidence of our support for this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

 PATRICK LEAHY United States Senator	 BERNARD SANDERS United States Senator	 PETER WELCH United States Congressman
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